

# Leflore County, MS Schools Link K-12 Students to Vital Health Care Onsite

by: Dr. Georgeanna (Ann) Wright, DHA, MSS

## SUMMARY

As of March 2016, nearly 1,500 K-12 students in Mississippi have increased access to preventive health care at school. Greenwood Leflore Hospital and its Partners in Health Coalition expanded the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) program to include Leflore County Schools. Now, low-income students can receive free health screenings, dental exams, and other medical services despite lack of transportation and resources. This expanded access was funded, in part, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



## CHALLENGE

According to 2011 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, children living in Leflore County experience one of the highest levels of poverty in the nation (62%). Many families cannot access basic health care services due to lack of transportation and other resources. For Leflore County Schools, this issue presented both an opportunity and a challenge. The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors notes that "reducing the risk and burden of chronic disease in school

communities promotes lifelong health and supports academic success."

Schools can play a critical role in supporting the health and safety of students. However, many schools located in low-income neighborhoods operate on limited budgets and rely on help from community partners. Leflore County Schools worked with Greenwood Leflore Hospital and its Partners in Health Coalition to increase access to health care for students.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

EPSDT programs are found in various states and strive to promote healthy schools and healthy communities. School systems can implement EPSDT to improve student health and encourage academic success.

To learn more, visit: <https://www.medicaid.gov/Medicaid-CHIP-Program-Information/By-Topics/Benefits/Early-and-Periodic-Screening-Diagnostic-and-Treatment.html>.

This project is supported by CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement.

*"I love EPSDT because the screenings are helping kids who need it. EPSDT reaches out to our community."*

*- Beverly Quinn, RN, EPSDT Program*

### Contact

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## SOLUTION

The partners used funding from CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) effort to expand the EPSDT program to include Leflore County Schools. The program provides a wide range of basic health services for children under age 21 who are enrolled in Medicaid. Families learned about the program through newsletters and email. The program brings licensed health care professionals onsite at participating schools throughout the semester so eligible students can receive free health screenings, routine dental exams, and immunizations. When needed, children are also given referrals to primary care doctors in the area.

## RESULTS

As of March 2016, nearly 1,500 K-12 students in Leflore County Schools have received basic health care services through the EPSDT program. That number represents almost two-thirds of the public school district's total student population. The initiative has shown how building connections between community and clinical resources can support populations in reaching their full health potential. By preventing disease, the EPSDT program helps children in Leflore County stay healthy so they can learn and grow.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Through REACH funding, Greenwood Leflore Hospital and its Partners in Health Coalition plan to further expand access to the EPSDT program in the next two years through referrals and increasing providers. Since the hospital serves low-income populations in Leflore, Holmes, and Tallahatchie counties, the goal is to work with another school district in one of these areas. Greenwood Leflore Hospital is currently in discussions with local school personnel and has a formal agreement to expand the EPSDT program to Greenwood Public School District.